

REMARKS

This Preliminary Amendment is submitted to improve the form of the specification as originally-filed.

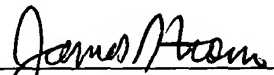
It is respectfully requested that this Preliminary Amendment be entered in the above-referenced application.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Preliminary Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: 27 June 2003

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please INSERT before the first line the sentence:

This application is a Continuation of application number 09/037,866, filed March 10, 1998, now pending, and incorporated by reference herein.

Please REPLACE the paragraph at page 3, lines 2-5, with:

It is an object of the present invention to provide a system which permits requests - either estimate requests or order requests - to vendors and for [request] conditions related to requests to be understood easily, by communicating electronic data.

Please REPLACE the paragraph at page 3, lines 6 - page 4 line 6, with:

According to an aspect of the present invention, there is provided an electronic transaction system for making a request for estimating or making a request for ordering an article or service required by an organization to a vendor outside the organization comprising: a processing unit installed inside the organization and having input means for inputting a[n estimate or order] request and inputting information related to the request on the basis of information sent from the vendor after the request has been made; and a management unit for managing communications between the processing unit in the organization and a processing unit in the vendor company, the management unit including: information entry means installed inside the organization for entering data input by the input means of the processing unit in the organization; transmission means for transmitting the [estimate or order] request entered into the information entry means installed in the organization and request-related data input later as requested by the processing unit in the vendor company; and entry means installed outside the organization for transmitting data used for the vendor to make a reply to the [estimate or order] request as requested by the processing unit in the vendor company and entering data input and

sent by the processing unit in the vendor company.

Please REPLACE the paragraph at page 4, line 7 - page 5, line 3, with:

According to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided an electronic transaction system for making a request for ordering or a request for estimating articles or services required by an organization to vendors outside the organization comprising: first processing units installed in department offices of the organization for inputting [order] requests and a second processing unit installed inside the organization for managing [estimate or order] requests made by the first processing units, the second processing unit including management means for managing dates of delivery of articles or services input from processing units installed in the vendor companies and acceptance processing means for deciding, for each first processing unit that makes a new estimate request or order request, the presence or absence of order requests made by that first processing unit for which acceptance inspection of an article or service delivered has not been made within a predetermined period of time after its date of delivery and refusing the new request when the acceptance inspection has not been made.

Please REPLACE the paragraph at page 5, lines 4-23, with:

According to still another aspect of the present invention, there is provided an electronic transaction management unit for managing communications between a processing unit installed inside an organization for making a request for estimating or a request for ordering an article or service and a processing unit installed in a vendor company outside the organization comprising: information entry means installed inside the organization for entering data input by the input means of the processing unit in the organization; transmission means for transmitting the [estimate or order] request entered into the information entry means installed in the organization and request-related data input later as requested by the processing unit in the vendor company; and entry means installed outside the organization for transmitting data used for the vendor to make a reply to the [estimate or order] request as requested by the processing unit in the vendor company and entering data input and sent by the processing unit in the vendor company.

Please REPLACE the paragraph at page 10, lines 11-23

In each office, a person in charge creates an electronic document for a request - either a request to estimate or a request to order a commodity - on the corresponding terminal and requests a manager to approve of it as it is, in the form of electronic data. Upon receipt of the approval of the manager, the person sends the request in the form of electronic data from the corresponding terminal to the terminal 19 (19') of the corresponding general affairs service center 15 (15'). When the request sent from the office is an estimate request, it is sent to the VAN center 16 as it is. In the VAN center, the request is recorded on the databases 23 and 24 and appears in a home page provided by the WWW server 20.

Please REPLACE the paragraph at page 11, line 12 - page 12, line 20, with:

In the case of an order request for a commodity, on the other hand, the general affairs service center first issues an estimate request to the vendor before the corresponding order request is made. [The] That estimate request is processed in the same manner as described previously. Upon receipt of the results of the estimate, the service center makes an order request to a vendor after evaluation of the results. This order request is made by sending a notification to the home page of the WWW server data to the effect that an order request is made to a specific vendor. If the ordering office has already received the results of the estimate, data to that effect is sent to the service center together with an order request. The evaluation made by the general affairs service center of the results of an estimate is one for, when two or more vendors 12 have sent the results of their estimates for an estimate request, deciding with which vendor an order is to be placed on the basis of evaluation criteria such as the total cost, item, discount amount, etc., as in the case of a public tender. In practice, the terminal in the general affairs service center can be set to automatically decide which vendor fulfills the evaluation criteria and then to make an order request to that vendor. At the same time, the person in charge and the management in the general affairs service center examine the data and make a decision, print the results as documentary evidence, and send the order [data] request to the WWW server. When the automatically sent order [data] request, and the order [data] request sent after the examination and the decision are received, they are displayed in the

home page of the WWW server 20, thus allowing the vendor 12 to know that an order request has been issued to it.

Please REPLACE the paragraph at page 17, lines 5-11, with:

In step S26, a request to [purchase] order a commodity is input and then sent to the system manager. Data items on the [purchase] order request includes requester information, desired term of delivery, item, and so on. If an estimate request has been made previously and a reply has been obtained from a vendor, an estimate number is also contained in the data items.

Please REPLACE the paragraph at page 17, lines 12-23, with:

Upon receipt of the [purchase] order request from the office system, the system manager determines whether or not an estimate number is contained in the [purchase] order requesting message (step S27). If it is not, the procedure goes to step S28 where an estimate request is entered in the general affairs service center. The steps that follow step S1 in FIG. 2 are then performed. If, on the other hand, an estimate number is contained, the procedure goes to step S29. When a reply to the estimate request made in step S28 is received, the procedure goes to steps S24 to S29 of FIG. 2.

Please REPLACE the paragraph at page 17, line 24 - page 18, line 7

In step S29, the person in charge in the service center set the term of delivery and, in step S30, it is entered into an ordering database (1). The [purchase] order request is then sent to the WWW server with the sender's code appended (step S31). The WWW server searches for an ordering database (2) corresponding to the sender's code and enters the ordering request [data] (purchase request) into the ordering database (2) (step S32).

Please REPLACE the paragraph starting at page 19, line 8, with:

On the vendor side, the received HTML data is displayed (step S39), and a candidate for

order acceptance processing is specified in the displayed list of records (step S40). The WWW server converts the record in the ordering database (2) corresponding to the specified candidate for processing into HTML data in the form of a statement of delivery and then sends it to the vendor (step S41). On the vendor side, the received HTML data is displayed (step S42) and printing is then specified (step S43). In response to this, the WWW server sends a statement of delivery (step S44). The statement is then printed on the vendor side (step S45). The WWW server enters the date of printing into the record in the ordering database (2) (step S46).

Please REPLACE the paragraph starting at page 20, line 11, with:

On the vendor side, the received HTML data is displayed (step S52) and a slip number of the statement of delivery obtained by the processing of FIG. 3 is input (step S53). Upon receipt of the slip number, the WWW server retrieves a record corresponding to the slip number from the ordering database (2) (step S54) and then sends that record converted into HTML data to the vendor (step S55). On the vendor side, the received HTML data is displayed (step 56) and the date of shipment is then entered (step S57). The WWW server placed the date of shipment in the corresponding record in the ordering database (2) (step S58). That record which has not yet been sent but contains the date of shipment is sent to the system manager (step S59). The system manager then updates the ordering database (1) on the basis of the received record (step 60). The system manager sends to the office system that record which, of records in the ordering database (1), has not been sent yet and contains the date of shipment (step S61) . On the office side, the date of acceptance is entered into the received record (step S62) and that record is then sent to the system manager.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please CANCEL claims 1-11.

Please ADD the following claims:

12. An electronic transaction system for making a request, which is one of an

estimate request and an order request, for an article or service required by an organization to a vendor outside the organization comprising:

a processing unit installed inside the organization and having input means for inputting a request in order to exhibit the request to a plurality of vendors outside of the organization and inputting information related to the request on the basis of information sent from the vendor after the request has been made, the information related to the request being generated and exhibited to the vendor after examining whether the information sent from the vendor meets requirements of the organization for purchasing articles or services which the vendor supplies; and

a management unit for managing communications between the processing unit in the organization and a processing unit in the vendor company, the management unit including:

information entry means installed inside the organization for entering data input by the input means of the processing unit in the organization;

transmission means for transmitting the request entered into the information entry means installed in the organization and request-related data input later as requested by the processing unit in the vendor company; and

entry means installed outside the organization for transmitting data used by the vendor to make a reply to the request as requested by the processing unit in the vendor company and entering data input and sent by the processing unit in the vendor company.

13. The electronic transaction system according to claim 12, wherein if, when an order request for an article or service is sent to the vendor, and an estimate reply has not been obtained from the vendor, a request to estimate the article or service is made to the vendor before the order request is sent and the order request is then sent after a reply to the estimate request has been received.

14. The electronic transaction system according to claim 13, wherein, when replies to the estimate request are obtained from two or more vendors, the order request is automatically made to a vendor that fulfills predetermined evaluation criteria.

15. The electronic transaction system according to claim 12, wherein when the

vendor accepts the order request, the management unit allows the processing unit installed in the vendor company to print a statement of delivery.

16. An electronic transaction system for making a request, which is one of an estimate request and an order request, for ordering articles or services required by an organization to vendors outside the organization comprising:

first processing units installed in department offices of the organization for inputting the request and a second processing unit installed inside the organization for managing the request made by the first processing units, wherein

the second processing unit including management means for managing dates of delivery of articles or services input from processing units installed in the vendor companies and acceptance processing means for determining, for each first processing unit that makes a new request, the presence or absence of order requests made by that first processing unit for which acceptance inspection of an article or service delivered has not been made within a predetermined period of time after its date of delivery and refusing the new request when the acceptance inspection has not been made.

17. An electronic transaction management unit for managing communications between a processing unit installed inside an organization for making a request, which is one of an estimate request and an order request, for an article or service and a processing unit installed in a vendor company outside the organization comprising:

information entry means installed inside the organization for entering data input by the input means of the processing unit in the organization;

transmission means for transmitting the request entered into the information entry means installed in the organization and request-related data input later as requested by the processing unit in the vendor company; and

entry means installed outside the organization for transmitting data used by the vendor to make a reply to the estimate or order request as requested by the processing unit in the vendor company and entering data input and sent by the processing unit in the vendor company.

18. The electronic transaction management unit according to claim 17, wherein the

management unit manages communications made by a plurality of organizations in relation to the request .

19. A computer-readable storage medium for allowing a computer to performs the functions of:

managing estimate requests or order requests made by first processing units installed in a plurality of departments in an organization;

managing dates of delivery of articles or services input by processing units installed in vendor companies outside the organization in response to order requests made by the first processing units; and

for a first processing unit that makes a new request, which is one of an estimate request and an order request, deciding the presence or absence of an order request for which acceptance inspection of an article or service delivered has not been made within a predetermined period of time after its date of delivery and refusing acceptance of the new request when the acceptance inspection has not yet been made.

20. A computer-readable storage medium for allowing a computer to perform the functions of:

entering data input by input means of a processing unit installed inside an organization;

transmitting a request which is one of an estimate or order request entered and data related to the request input later as requested by a processing unit installed in a vendor company outside the organization; and

transmitting data used by the vendor to make a reply to the request as requested by the processing unit in the vendor company and entering data input and transmitted by the processing unit in the vendor company.

21. An electronic transaction system for making a request, which is one of an estimate request and order request, for an article or service required by an organization, comprising:

a processing unit inputting the request ;

a communication unit communicating the request to a plurality of vendors;

an information management unit receiving information from the vendors related to the request; and
an order processing unit inputting an order in response to the received information.

22. A method for fulfilling a request for a bid, comprising:
entering a request for a bid to acquire an article or service;
accessing the request by at least one supplier across a network; and
transmitting a response to the request across the network from the at least one supplier.

23. The method for fulfilling a request according to claim 22, further comprising entering an order for the article or service based on the response.

24. A method for implementing a business to business electronic marketplace, comprising:
soliciting estimates for fulfilling a requirement of the first business, by sending an estimate request from the first business to a Value Added Network (VAN), where the VAN is accessible at least by the first business and a second business;
posting the estimate request on the VAN;
accessing, by a plurality of businesses, the posted estimate request;
estimating, by a second business within the plurality of businesses, the conditions by which the second business is willing to fulfill the requirement corresponding to the posted and accessed estimate request;
submitting the estimated conditions to the VAN; and
notifying the first business, via the VAN, that the second business has submitted the estimated conditions.

25. The method recited in claim 24, wherein said soliciting, posting, accessing, estimating, submitting, and notifying are responsive to the first business generating an order request.

26. The method recited in claim 25, further comprising:
placing, on the VAN, the order request, pursuant to the conditions that were estimated, submitted, and notified, said placing responsive to the first business generating the order request.

27. The method recited in claim 26, further comprising:
making, within an office of the first business, an internal request which is one of an internal estimate request and an internal order request, the internal request corresponding to the requirement of the first business; and
presenting the made internal request to a service center within the first business;
evaluating for approval the presented request, at the service center, responsive to said presenting, and before said soliciting; and
wherein said soliciting further comprises soliciting in response said evaluating.

28. A method for procuring, over a network, from within an organization, a vendor's goods and services, comprising:
requisitioning, within a first division of the organization, goods or services;
approving, within a second division of the organization, the requisition;
generating and sending to the vendor a purchase order corresponding to the approved requisition;
delivering, from the vendor to the first division, the ordered goods or services;
receiving and accepting, at the first division, the delivered goods or services;
notifying the second division that said receiving and accepting has occurred; and
paying-out, at the second division, for the delivered goods or services.

29. A computer-readable storage medium for allowing a computer to perform the functions of:
entering data input by input means of a processing unit installed inside an organization;
transmitting an order request entered and data related to the order request input later as requested by a processing unit installed in a vendor company outside the organization; and

transmitting data used by the vendor to make a reply to the order request as requested by the processing unit in the vendor company and entering data input and transmitted by the processing unit in the vendor company.

30. An electronic transaction system for ordering an article or service required by an organization, comprising:

- a processing unit inputting a request for an order;
- a communication unit communicating the order request to a plurality of vendors;
- an information management unit receiving information from the vendors related to the order request; and
- an order processing unit inputting an order in response to the received information.